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# The SPECTATOR.

*Reddere perſonæ ſcit convenientia cuique.* Hor.

*Saturday, April* 19. 1712.

THE Tenth Book of *Paradiſe Loſt* has a greater variety of Perſons in it than any other in the whole Poem. The Author upon the winding up of his Action introduces all thoſe who had any Concern in it, and ſhews with great Beauty the influence which had upon each of them. It is like the laſt Act of a well written Tragedy, in which all who had a part in it are generally drawn up before the Audience, and repreſented under thoſe Circumſtances in which the determination of the Action leaves them.

I ſhall therefore conſider this Book under four Heads, in relation to the Celeſtial, the Infernal, the Human, and the Imaginary Perſons, who have their reſpective Parts allotted to them.

To begin with the Celeſtial Perſons: The Guardian Angels of *Paradiſe* are deſcribed as returning to Heaven upon the Fall of Man, in order to approve their Vigilance; their Arrival, their manner of Reception, with the Sorrow which appeared in themſelves, and in thoſe Spirits who are ſaid to rejoice at the Converſion of a Sinner, are very finely laid together in the following Lines.

*Up into Heav'n from Paradiſe in haſte*
*Th'angelick guards aſcended, mute and ſad*
*For man, for of his ſtate by this they knew*
*Much wond'ring how the ſubtle Fiend had ſtoln*
*Entrance unſeen. Soon as th' unwelcome news*
*From earth arriv'd at Heaven Gate, diſpleas'd*
*All were who heard, dim ſadneſs did not ſpare*
*That time Celeſtial viſages, yet mixt*
*With pity, violated not their bliſs.*
*About the new-arriv'd, in multitudes*
*Th'Æthereal people ran, to hear and know*
*How all befell: They tow'rds the throne ſupreame*
*Accountable made haſte to make appear*
*With righteous plea, their utmoſt vigilance,*
*And eaſily approv'd; when the moſt High*
*Eternal father from his ſecret cloud,*
*Amidſt in thunder utter'd thus his voice.*

The ſame Divine Perſon who in the foregoing parts of the Poem interceded for our firſt Parents before their Fall, overthrew the Rebel Angels, and created the World, is now repreſented as deſcending to *Paradiſe*, and pronouncing Sentence upon the three Offenders. The cool of the Evening, being a Circumſtance with which Holy Writ introduces this great Scene, it is Poetically deſcribed by our Author, who has alſo kept religiouſly to the form of Words, in which the three ſeveral Sentences were paſſed upon *Adam*, *Eve* and the Serpent. He has rather chuſen to neglect the numerouſneſs of his Verſe, than to vary from thoſe Speeches which are recorded on this great occaſion. The Guilt and Confuſion of our firſt Parents appearing naked before their Judge, is touch'd with great Beauty. Upon the arrival of *Sin* and *Death* into the Works of the Creation, the Almighty is again introduced as ſpeaking to his Angels that ſurrounded him.

*See with what heat theſe Dogs of Hell advance*
*To waſte and havock yonder world, which I*
*So fair and good created*, &c.

The following Paſſage is formed upon that glorious Image in Holy Writ which compares the Voice of an innumerable Hoſt of Angels, uttering Hallelujahs, to the Voice of many Thunderings, or of many Waters.

*He ended, and the Heav'nly Audience loud*
*Sung Hallelujah, as the ſound of Seas,*
*Through multitude that ſung: Juſt are thy ways,*
*Righteous are thy Decrees in all thy Works,*
*Who can extenuate thee?* ——

Though the Author in the whole courſe of his Poem, particularly in the Book we are now examining, has inſerted Alluſions to places of Scripture, I have only taken notice of ſome Remarks of ſuch as are of a Poetical Nature, and which are woven with great Beauty into the Body of this Work. Of this kind is that Paſſage in the preſent Book, where deſcribing *Sin* and *Death* as marching through the Confuſion of Nature, he adds,

——*Behind her Death*
*Cloſe following pace for pace, not mounted yet*
*On his pale horſe:* ——

Which alludes to that Paſſage in Scripture ſo wonderfully Great and terrifying to the Imagination. *And I looked, and behold, a pale Horſe, and his Name that ſat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with ſword, and with hunger, and with ſickneſs, and with the beaſts of the earth.* After this firſt head of Celeſtial Perſons we muſt take notice of the Command which the Angels received, to produce the ſeveral Changes in Nature, and ſully the Beauty of the Creation. Accordingly they are repreſented as infecting the Stars and Planets with malignant Influences, weakning the Light of the Sun, bringing down the Winter into the milder Regions of Nature, planting Winds and Storms in ſeveral Quarters of the Sky, ſtoring the Clouds with Thunder, and in ſhort, perverting the whole frame of the Univerſe to the condition of its Criminal Inhabitants. As this is a noble Incident in the Poem, the following Lines, in which we ſee the Angels heaving up the Earth, and placing it in a different poſture to the Sun from what it had before the Fall of Man, is conceived with that ſublime Imagination which was ſo peculiar to this great Author.

*Some ſay he bid his angels turn aſcanſe*
*The Poles of earth twice ten degrees and more*
*From the Sun's Axle; they with labour puſh'd*
*Oblique the Centrick Globe* ——

We are in the ſecond place to conſider the Infernal Agents under the View which *Milton* has given us of them in this Book. It is obſerved by thoſe who would ſet forth the Greatneſs of *Virgil*'s Plan, that he conducts his Reader thro' all the Parts of the Earth which were diſcover'd in his time. *Aſia*, *Africk* and *Europe* are the ſeveral Scenes of his Fable. The Plan of *Milton*'s Poem is of an infinitely greater extent, and fills the Mind with many more aſtoniſhing Circumſtances. *Satan*, having ſurrounded the Earth ſeven times, departs at length from *Paradiſe*. We afterwards ſee him ſteering his Courſe among the Conſtellations, and after having traverſed the whole Creation, purſuing his Voyage through the *Chaos*, and entering into his own Infernal Dominions.

His firſt appearance in the Aſſembly of Fallen Angels is work'd up with Circumſtances which give a delightful Surprize to the Reader; but there is no Incident in the whole Poem which does this more than the Transformation of the whole Audience, that follows the account their Leader gives them of his Expedition. The gradual change of *Satan* himſelf is deſcribed after *Ovid*'s manner, and may vie with any of thoſe celebrated Transformations which are looked upon as the moſt beautiful parts in that Poet's Works. *Milton* never fails of improving his own Hints, and beſtowing the laſt finiſhing Touches to every Incident which is admitted into his Poem. The unexpected Hiſs which riſes in this Epiſode, the Dimenſions and Bulk of *Satan* ſo much ſuperior to thoſe of the Infernal Spirits who lay under the ſame Transformation, with the annual Change which they are ſuppoſed to ſuffer, are Inſtances of this kind. The Beauty of the Diction is very remarkable in this whole Epiſode, as I have obſerved in the Sixth Paper of theſe my Remarks the great Judgment with which it was contrived.

The Parts of *Adam* and *Eve*, or the Humane Perſons, come next under our Conſideration. *Milton*'s Art is no where more ſhewn than in his conducting the parts of theſe our firſt Parents. The Repreſentation he gives of them, without falſifying the Story, is wonderfully contrived to influence the Reader with Pity and Compaſſion towards them. Tho' *Adam* involves the whole Species in Miſery, his Crime proceeds from a Weakneſs which every Man is inclin'd to pardon and commiſerate, as it ſeems rather the frailty of Humane Nature, than of the Perſon who offended. Every one is apt to excuſe a Fault which he himſelf might have fallen into. It was the Exceſs of Love for *Eve* that ruined *Adam* and his Poſterity. I need not add, that the Author is juſtified in this particular by many of the Fathers, and the moſt Orthodox Writers. *Milton* has by this means filled a great part of his Poem with that kind of Writing which the *French* Criticks call the *Tender*, and which is in a particular manner engaging to all ſorts of Readers.

*Adam* and *Eve*, in the Book we are now conſidering, are likewiſe drawn with ſuch Sentiments as do not only intereſt the Reader in their Afflictions, but raiſe in him the moſt melting Paſſions of Humanity and Commiſeration. When *Adam* ſees the ſeveral Changes in Nature produced about him, he appears in a diſorder of Mind ſuitable to one who had forfeited both his Innocence and his Happineſs. He is filled with Horror, Remorſe, Deſpair; in the anguiſh of his Heart he expoſtulates with his Creator for giving him an unaſked Exiſtence.

*Did I requeſt thee, Maker, from my Clay*
*To mould me Man, did I ſolicite thee*
*From darkneſs to promote me, or here place*
*In this delicious Garden? as my will*
*Concurr'd not to my being, 'twere but right*
*And equal to reduce me to my duſt,*
*Deſirous to reſign, and render back*
*All I receiv'd* ——

He immediately after recovers from his Presumption, owns his Doom to be just, and begs that the Death which is threaten'd him may be inflicted on him.

———*Why delays*
*His hand to execute what his decree*
*Fix'd on this day? Why do I overlive,*
*Why am I mock'd with Death, and lengthen'd out*
*To Deathless pain? how gladly would I meet*
*Mortality my Sentence, and be earth*
*Insensible, how glad would lay me down*
*As in my mothers lap? there should I rest*
*And sleep secure; his dreadful voice no more*
*Would thunder in my ears, no fear of worse*
*To me and to my off-spring, would torment me*
*With cruel expectation.*———

This whole Speech is full of the like Emotion, and varied with all those Sentiments which we may suppose natural to a Mind so broken and disturb'd. I must not omit that generous Concern which our first Father shows in it for his Posterity, and which is so proper to affect the Reader.

———*Hide me from the face*
*Of God, whom to behold was then my height*
*Of Happiness: yet well if here would end*
*The misery, I deserv'd it, and would bear*
*My own deservings; but this will not serve;*
*All that I eat, or drink, or shall beget,*
*Is propagated Curse. O voice once heard*
*Delightfully, encrease and multiply,*
*Now Death to hear!*———
———*In me all*
*Posterity stands curst: Fair Patrimony*
*That I must leave you, Sons; O were I able*
*To waste it all my self, and leave you none!*
*So disinherited how would you bless*
*Me now your curse! Ah, why should all Mankind*
*For one Mans fault thus guiltless be condemned*
*If guiltless? But from me what can proceed*
*But all corrupt*———

Who can afterwards behold the Father of Mankind extended upon the Earth, uttering his Midnight Complaints, bewailing his Existence, and wishing for Death, without sympathizing with him in his Distress?

*Thus Adam to himself lamented loud*
*Through the still night, not now, as e're man fell*
*Wholesome and cool and mild, but with black Air*
*Accompanied, with damps and dreadful gloom*
*Which to his evil Conscience represented*
*All things with double terrour: on the Ground*
*Outstretch'd he lay, on the cold ground, and oft*
*Curs'd his Creation, Death as oft accus'd*
*Of tardy execution.*———

The Part of *Eve* in this Book is no less passionate, and apt to sway the Reader in her Favour. She is represented with great Tenderness as approaching *Adam*, but is spurn'd from him with a Spirit of Upbraiding and Indignation conformable to the Nature of Man, whose Passions had now gained the Dominion over him. The following Passage, wherein she is described as renewing her Addresses to him, with the whole Speech that follows it, have something in them exquisitely moving and pathetick.

*He added not, and from her turn'd: but Eve*
*Not so repulst, with tears that ceas'd not flowing*
*And tresses all disorder'd, at his Feet*
*Fell humble, and embracing them, besought*
*His peace, and thus proceeding in her plaint.*
*Forsake me not thus Adam, witness Heav'n*
*What love sincere and reverence in my heart*
*I bear thee, and unweeting have offended,*
*Unhappily deceiv'd; thy Suppliant*
*I beg, and clasp thy knees; bereave me not,*
*Wherein I live, thy gentle looks, thy aid,*
*Thy counsel in this uttermost distress,*
*My only strength and stay: Forlorn of thee*
*Whither shall I betake me, where subsist?*
*While yet we live scarce one short hour perhaps,*
*Between us two let there be peace,* &c.

*Adam*'s Reconcilement to her is worked up in the same Spirit of Tenderness. *Eve* afterwards proposes to her Husband, in the Blindness of her Despair, that to prevent their Guilt from descending upon Posterity they should resolve to live Childless; or, if that could not be done, that they should seek their own Deaths by violent Methods. As those Sentiments naturally engage the Reader to regard the Mother of Mankind with more than ordinary Commiseration, they likewise contain a very fine Moral. The Resolution of dying to end our Miseries does not shew such a degree of Magnanimity as a Resolution to bear them, and submit to the Dispensations of Providence. Our Author has therefore, with great Delicacy, represented *Eve* as entertaining this Thought, and *Adam* as disapproving it.

We are, in the last place, to consider the Imaginary Persons, or *Sin* and *Death*, who act a large part in this Book. Such beautiful extended Allegories are certainly some of the finest Compositions of Genius; but, as I have before observed, are not agreeable to the Nature of an Heroic Poem. This of *Sin* and *Death* is very exquisite in its kind, if not considered as a Part of such a Work. The Truths contained in it are so clear and open that I shall not lose time in explaining them, but shall only observe, that a Reader who knows the Strength of the *English* Tongue will be amazed to think how the Poet could find such apt Words and Phrases to describe the Action of these two imaginary Persons, and particularly in that Part where *Death* is exhibited as forming a Bridge over the *Chaos*: a Work suitable to the Genius of *Milton*.

Since the Subject I am upon gives me an Opportunity of speaking more at large of such Shadowy and imaginary Persons as may be introduced into Heroic Poems, I shall beg leave to explain my self on a Matter which is curious in its kind, and which none of the Criticks have treated of. It is certain *Homer* and *Virgil* are full of imaginary Persons, who are very beautiful in Poetry when they are just shown, without being engaged in any Series of Action. *Homer* indeed represents *Sleep* as a Person, and ascribes a short Part to him in his *Iliad*; but we must consider that tho' we now regard such a Person as entirely Shadowy and unsubstantial, the Heathens made Statues of him, placed him in their Temples, and looked upon him as a real Deity. When *Homer* makes use of other such Allegorical Persons it is only in short Expressions, which convey an ordinary Thought to the Mind in the most pleasing manner, and may rather be looked upon as Poetical Phrases than allegorical Descriptions. Instead of telling us that Men naturally fly when they are terrified, he introduces the Persons of *Flight* and *Fear*, who he tells us are inseparable Companions. Instead of saying that the Time was come when *Apollo* ought to have received his Recompence, he tells us that the *Hours* brought him his Reward. Instead of describing the Effects which *Minerva*'s *Ægis* produced in Battel, he tells us that the Brims of it were encompassed by *Terrour*, *Rout*, *Discord*, *Fury*, *Pursuit*, *Massacre* and *Death*. In the same Figure of speaking he represents *Victory* as following *Diomedes*; *Discord* as the Mother of Funerals and Mourning, *Venus* as dressed by the *Graces*, *Bellona* as wearing Terrour and Consternation like a Garment. I might give several other Instances out of *Homer*, as well as a great many out of *Virgil*. *Milton* has likewise very often made use of the same way of speaking, as where he tells us that *Victory* sat on the right hand of the Messiah, when he march'd forth against the Rebel Angels; that at the rising of the Sun the *Hours* unbarr'd the Gates of Light; that *Discord* was the Daughter of *Sin*. Of the same nature are those Expressions where describing the singing of the Nightingale he adds, *Silence was pleased*; and upon the Messiah's bidding Peace to the *Chaos*, *Confusion heard his voice*. I might add innumerable other Instances of our Poet's writing in this beautiful Figure. It is plain from these I have mentioned, in which Persons of an imaginary Nature are introduced, are such short Allegories as are not designed to be taken in the litteral Sense, but only to convey particular Circumstances to the Reader after an unusual and entertaining Manner. But when such Persons are introduced as principal Actors, and engaged in a Series of Adventures, they take too much upon them, and are by no means proper for an Heroic Poem, which ought to appear credible in its principal Parts. I cannot forbear therefore thinking that *Sin* and *Death* are as improper Agents in a Work of this Nature, as *Strength* and *Violence* in one of the Tragedies of *Æschylus*, who represents those two Persons nailing down *Prometheus* to a Rock, for which he has been justly censured by the greatest Critics. I do not know any imaginary Person made use of in a more Sublime manner of thinking than that in one of the Prophets, who describing God as descending from Heaven and visiting the Sins of Mankind, adds that dreadful Circumstance; *Before him went the Pestilence*. It is certain this imaginary Person might have been described in all her purple Spots. The *Fever* might have march'd before her, *Pain* might have stood at her right Hand, *Phrenzy* on her left, and *Death* in her Rear. She might have been introduced as gliding down from the Tail of a Comet, or darted upon the Earth in a Flash of Lightning. She might have tainted the Atmosphere with her Breath; the very glaring of her Eyes might have scattered Infection. But I believe every Reader will think that in such Sublime Writings the mentioning of her as it is done in Scripture has something in it more just as well as great, than all that the most fanciful Poet could have bestowed upon her in the Richness of his Imagination.


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